

Awake by DBSean

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Summary: El smiled as she looked around the room. Yes, it smelled like boys, but it was not an altogether unpleasant scent, as it meant a) she was home, and b) she was not alone

Awake

"Awake"

A/N: Hope everyone enjoyed the holidays! Had some creative energy today, so I figured I would pump out a short little oneshot. I free-styled this one, so I hope it's up to snuff.

Post-Season 2, like everything else I write.

'It smells like boys down here,' El thinks as the last of her dream fades away and she wakes to find herself lying in the Wheelers' basement.

Indeed, the basement air was heavy with all the telltale scents of male pubescence: greasy pizza boxes, sweaty socks that needed desperately to be washed, and cheap deodorant quickly losing ground against the rising tide of teenage body odor. A half-finished Dungeons & Dragons campaign sat in the corner of the room, pushed aside to in order to make space for the television Lucas had lugged over all the way from next door. Pillows and blankets lay all about the place, as did quite a few bags of chips and some rather unsavory-looking Twizzlers, and one would be forgiven for thinking a tornado had torn through the place only moments prior.

The Party had been up late the night before, it being a Friday, watching movies and playing D&D and generally getting up to as much 'no good' as a group of well-behaved fourteen-year-olds could get up to without leaving the confines of the basement. El wasn't sure when she and the others had finally collapsed from exhaustion and given way to sleep, but surely it had to have been approaching midnight at the very earliest.

Nonetheless, El smiled as she looked around the room. Yes, it smelled like boys, but it was not an altogether unpleasant scent, as it meant a) she was home, and b) she was not alone. The members of the party lay scattered around the room like flies swatted from the air, having seemingly fallen asleep the moment their heads touched the floor.

Dustin lay in the basement's sole loveseat, his hands clasped together over his stomach and his head tilted back as he snored loudly,

providing a soundtrack for the occasion. Will was curled up in a ball only a few feet away on the ground, nestled below the television and dangerously close to potentially knocking it over. Lucas and Max, El realized with a sly grin, had both fallen asleep leaning against the very same loveseat Dustin was currently lounging within, their legs sprawled out in front of them and their heads resting against one another. Mike, meanwhile, lay on the basement couch, his head resting on a pillow pressed up against the armrest and his legs stretched out until his feet pressed up against the opposing armrest.

And El? El was lying on top of Mike.

The very second Mike had collapsed onto the couch the evening before, El had joined him, burying her face into his fuzzy sweater and wrapping her arms around him like he was her own personal teddy bear; which, to a degree, he was. Not a word was said between them as Mike stretched his feet out and wrapped a single arm around El's waist, holding her to him and securing her just enough so that she would not fall off the couch in the middle of the night. And so it was that El spent the entirety of the night sleeping not technically on the couch, but on Mike, his gentle breathing and steady heartbeat the soundtrack that put her to sleep.

El couldn't remember exactly when or how she and Mike had grown so close and so comfortable around one another, mostly because she had trouble remembering a time in which she and Mike had *not* been this close. It seemed only natural to her, and it was a testament to the strength of her friendship with the rest of the members of the Party that it seemed only natural to them as well. It was simply a fact of life, a law of the universe, one of many.

Two plus two equals four.

It took the Earth twenty-four hours to rotate on its axis.

Mike belonged with El, and El belonged with Mike.

It was as simple as that.

Still, though relatively new to the world outside of Hawkins Lab, El was at least aware that, to the uninitiated, her emotional and

physical attachment to Mike was unusual. After all, as far as Karen and Ted Wheeler and the rest of the world were concerned, Mike had only met Jane 'El' Hopper the summer before he began high school, and to learn the two of them were already *dating*, already *going steady*, was a bit of a shock, to say the least.

But that was because the rest of the world didn't know what they had gone through. They didn't know about Demogorgons, and the Upside Down, and the Mind Flayer, and clandestine government agencies that abducted children in their youth and subjected them to inhuman experiments. They knew none of those things, and so they knew not the true story of Mike Wheeler and Eleven, the girl now known as Jane Hopper.

They didn't know how Mike had hid El in his basement for almost an entire week, feeding her and housing her and looking after her as if was his very purpose in life to do so.

They didn't know how El had sacrificed herself to protect Mike and the others from an interdimensional monstrosity too terrifying to put into words.

They didn't know of the three hundred and fifty-three agonizing days the two had spent separated from one another, neither able to contact the other, calling out into the void hoping and wishing the other would hear and return their call.

Yes, to the outside world, the romance of Mike and El was an enigma, but it didn't seem to matter as El snuggled back into Mike's chest. The only thing that seemed to matter right then and there was the feel of his body beneath hers, his arm around her waist, his breath on her scalp, gently blowing into her curly hair and unintentionally tickling the back of her neck. In short, Mike was the only thing that seemed to matter.

El didn't have to think hard to remember a time when any of this would have been impossible, when she would have woken up in the early hours of the morning to find herself in a sterile room containing only a bed, a couple of stuffed animals, and whatever pictures the Department of Energy had allowed her to draw. She would have woken up in the darkness and merely waited, waited for someone to

come and collect her and prepare her for whatever menial task or inhuman experiment awaited her that day.

Not anymore. Now, instead, she woke up to Dustin's snoring, to Will lying on the floor, to Max and Lucas leaning against each other, and to Mike lying underneath her. She woke up to greasy pizza boxes, and haphazardly placed blankets and pillows, and the stench of sweaty socks that seemed to permeate every inch of the basement.

She woke up to friends.

Soon enough, the others would wake, and the basement would once again be alive with adolescent energy as everyone tried to clean up as best they could before Mrs. Wheeler descended the stairs during her morning inspection. Lucas and Max would wake up, their faces red with embarrassment, and immediately draw apart from one another, acting as though the other had wronged them in some manner. Will would neatly fold the blankets he was using before attempting to wake Dustin, only for Dustin to fall back asleep almost immediately, later claiming indignantly that he had never fallen asleep in the first place, despite the dull roar of his snoring and the line of drool running down his jaw.

And Mike? Mike would wake up and smile down at the girl sleeping on top of him before leaning down and planting a kiss on her forehead. El would wake up with a smile of her own, and ask for five more minutes, and Mike would laugh and half-heartedly try to get her to sit up. She would, eventually, but only after Mike pressed his lips against hers and woke her up with a good morning kiss. Those were, after all, El's favorite.

For now, however, there was peace and quiet, and no one needed to be awake, El least of all. So, with one last cursory glance around at her friends, El yawned and closed her eyes, fully intent on going right back to sleep.

'Yes, it definitely smells like boys,' El thought as she closed her eyes and nuzzled into Mike's chest once again. 'But it smells like *my* boys.'

And that made all the difference in the world.

A/N: Is it just me, or do a lot of my stories involve people sleeping?